

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence, City Hall

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

June 21, 2011

Open Session

Mr. Tsonos called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. School Committee members present: Luisa Abatecola, Stephen Furtado, Ryan Tellier, Chrissy Rossi and Charles Tsonos. Also present: Robert M. Silva, Esq. and Andrew Thomas, Esq.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado stating that the Committee would not convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1), Superintendent's Performance and Contract, Administrative Leave, and Contract Renewal, Collective Bargaining, and Litigation/Pending Litigation - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2). Motion seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Moment of Silence were observed.

New Business - Public Comment Policy

Change the Order of the Agenda - A motion was made by Mrs. Rossi to request unanimous consent to move to Item I. New Business on the agenda to discuss the Public Comment Policy, seconded by Mr. Furtado. Mrs. Rossi stated that it had been brought to her attention that the School Committee never addressed the public comment policy and that some people were cut short speaking at a prior meeting. Mrs. Rossi requested that anyone wishing to address the School Committee have as much time as needed to speak on an issue; she would like to address this policy at the next meeting. All agreed, voting 5-0 to approve this request.

Action Items

Superintendent's Performance and Contract, Administrative Leave, and Contract Renewal – Motion was made by Mr. Tellier to continue the Superintendent on administrative leave, seconded by Mr. Furtado.

Roll call vote: Mrs. Abatecola, nay; Mr. Furtado, aye; Mr. Tellier, aye; Mrs. Rossi, nay; Mr. Tsonos, aye; vote 3-2 to approve. A motion was made by Mr. Furtado not to renew the Superintendent's contract and to send a notice of non-renewal for the fourth year of the contract; seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0 for no contract renewal for the fourth year. All aye.

Motion by Mr. Furtado to appoint Mr. Edward Daft (Assistant Superintendent) as Interim Superintendent, seconded by Mr. Tellier.

Discussion: In response to a question from Mrs. Abatecola, Mr. Tsonos answered there would not be a stipend for this interim position.

Mrs. Rossi stated that she planned to approve this only because someone needs to be in a leadership position in the district. Mr. Tellier said he was comfortable with having Mr. Daft in the position of running the district at this time and has confidence in his ability. Roll call vote: Mrs. Abatecola, aye, Mr. Furtado, aye; Mr. Tellier, aye; Mrs. Rossi, aye; Mr. Tsonos, aye. Motion passed 5-0.

Mr. Tsonos opened the meeting to provide an opportunity for Dr. Cirillo, to address the Committee; Dr. Cirillo requested discussion in an open meeting rather than in executive session. School legal counsel, Mr. Robert Silva, advised the School Committee that he had an opportunity to meet with Mr. Robinson and his associate who will be representing Dr. Cirillo and that Dr. Cirillo had requested that the matter be held in open session rather than in executive session; therefore, there would be no need for executive session to take place, if this was only a continuance of administrative leave. Mr. Robinson, counsel for Dr. Cirillo, agreed to take up any other matters with Mr. Silva, and declined the offer to address the School Committee in public.

Requisitions – Bill Lists

Warrant #1108 dated 6/17/11 \$805,824.38

Motion to approve by Mr. Furtado, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Public Comment:

Mrs. Cathy Grillo, Hamilton Street, spoke on behalf of residents of

East Providence, presenting a petition signed by parents asking the School Committee to rescind the action regarding the Superintendent, and to rehire Dr. Cirillo. She wanted it on the record that parents do care, even though the action had already been taken.

Mr. William Murphy presented a memo and supporting documents to the School Committee regarding the importance of addressing the deficit quickly and emphasized potential problems which could emerge if it is not done including possible termination of purchase orders and legal actions which could impact the welfare of the city. He felt that arguments made at the last meeting and the action placing Dr. Cirillo on administrative leave should be reconsidered, since the School Committee and legal counsel also have responsibilities regarding deficit elimination and the fact that the vast majority of the deficit was accumulated before Dr. Cirillo had control of the budget. Mr. Murphy stated that last year, the department ended with a surplus (confirmed by city audit) due to decisions made by the prior School Committee and City Council including unilateral implementation of pay reductions. He stated that the School Committee recently reported that some of their issues with Dr. Cirillo had been resolved and he felt there was no compelling reason to put the Superintendent on leave, since he believed that Dr. Cirillo could help with the deficit problem.

Tony Gouveia from Riverside stated that the School Committee must be beyond the type of decision that the reason for dismissing the

educational leader is that we do not like him; the community is in the middle of a royal mess with no faith in anyone and he hoped more specifics would be given about dismissing the Superintendent. He hoped that going forward the School Committee will keep in mind that their decision will affect 5800 students and that there is nothing wrong with anyone changing their mind on this decision.

Joe Tavares has worked for the department for 17 years through five or six Superintendents and all had some good points. He felt that over the last 2 1/2 years, working with Dr. Cirillo had been an exciting and rewarding time, especially since the passage of a bond which has allowed work to be done in areas that were neglected for years including fire code issues. He felt that the Superintendent has done a great job for the community regardless of any differences.

Mary Texeira stated that when the last School Committee came in, they chose the people they wanted and did what they wanted; this School Committee was handcuffed with 21 contracts and an extension on the Superintendent's contract, which did not give them much choice; the last School Committee should not have taken that action after being voted out; this School Committee should have been able to do what they wanted and it is unfair for people to now say this is their fault. She appreciates the fact that although the School Committee is in a difficult situation, they will do what is best for children of East Providence.

Appointment of the Facilities Manager/Interim Manager

Mrs. Rossi stated that at the last meeting, she was in agreement with appointing a Facilities Manager because of the construction bond work. Mr. Tellier also brought up consolidation as well; she thought more about it and spoke to the Mayor; facilities ties into the consolidation item under Old Business; there was no consolidation committee. After discussing this with Mayor Rogers; she recommends consolidation of the school position with the city position to see if it can work. Mrs. Rossi requested that legal counsel research regarding any stipulations and reservations and to put together a report for the next meeting; she will contact the attorneys to give them the whole plan to be written up. Motion by Mrs. Rossi to see if we can achieve cost savings and a solid product, instead of appointing a school facilities manager, to consolidate that position with city, seconded by Mr. Tellier, who asked about a time frame.

Mrs. Rossi requested that our legal review with Mr. Craven to see what the City Charter says; she could not find anything on it; this appears to be the first of its kind, a hybrid. The city facilities person has a background in buildings. She would like to have this put together to go before the City Council meeting on June 28th which would be the first possibility to act on it. The city person should spend time in each building with head janitors and Mr. Tavares (outgoing Facilities Manager) to make this a reality. Mr. Tsonos noted a sense of urgency on the city side with the work being done at

schools. Mrs. Rossi said we have to be willing to send this to the City Council to vote on it as soon as possible.

Mr. Silva said he was not conversant with the consolidation efforts; he will call the City Solicitor to address this issue and to see if it is appropriate for City Council agenda and respond to the School Committee if this would require action by both City Council and School Committee. He will respond back after familiarizing himself with the issue.

Mrs. Rossi said she looked through Title 16 laws and the City Charter; not sure where else it would be listed. Since we are in charge of children, school facilities issues would have to trump city issues; she would like to go over this to make a proposal to the city. Mr. Silva will discuss with Mrs. Rossi to find out if it can be done; he believes it can, but not how it should be done; the devil is in the details; Mr. Silva will address forthwith. Mrs. Abatecola asked what about delays in the bond work to be done. Mr. Silva hoped not, he will investigate from legal perspective, but was not familiar with the bond or the work to be done; if there are problems or delays, he should be advised immediately.

Mrs. Rossi stated that she has been on the Building Committee and attended all the meetings; everything is going smoothly. Mrs. Whalen asked who would be in charge of day to day personnel and scheduling issues. Mr. Tsonos anticipated that this situation should

be solved in seven days; Mr. Tavares is still working and Mr. Feola has been acting in the job. The motion had been made and seconded, all voted aye.

Personnel Appointments/Recalls/Layoffs & Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence

RETIREMENT

Margarita Victoria Hosford

Nurse – Whiteknact Elementary School (21 years)

RESIGNATION

Liza Allienello

Secretary Nurse's office – High School - Effective 6/14/2011 (1 year)

APPOINTMENTS

Linda Jackson –

Career/Technical School - 3/5th position to 5/5th position (Program enrollment)

Motion by Mr. Furtado on Linda Jackson appointment only, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Name (TBD) PE/Health/Adaptive – Elementary from 4/5th position to 5/5th position

(Enrollment – Oldham)

Name (TBD) Portfolio Camp Instructor - Social Studies

Discussion on items indicated as TBD : Mrs. Whalen requested School Committee approval of To Be Determined items in order to put the positions out to bid, recall an employee on lay-off or post the openings on School Spring. Mrs. Rossi asked for confirmation that any action on the hiring of the two TBD requests would require further approval by the School Committee. All voted aye

Old Business

Deficit Elimination Committee

Mrs. Rossi received advice from Mr. Conley about postponing future meetings since he wanted the new City Finance Director to get up to speed first and she believes we should postpone the meetings until a Superintendent is in place. Mr. Tsonos did not agree; he believes who is here or not, the bills still need to be paid; we need to function and move forward; we should not delay with problems looming. The City Council is willing to work with the School Committee on consolidation and deficit reduction and he would like to move forward.

Consolidation Committee – already addressed

2011/12 Budget – Mary King, Finance Director, reported that both

good and bad news received at the State House budget hearings: we will not be responsible as an LEA for the cost of students at the training school; we will no longer have to advertise School Committee meetings in the newspaper which should save five to seven thousand dollars per year; there will be no reduction in money from the state for textbooks for non-public school students. The bad news is that funding was cut by \$278,000; therefore, the deficit could be an additional \$1.4 to \$1.7 million for fiscal 2011 on top of the existing \$6.3 million dollar deficit. Mr. Tsonos stated that the Committee must move forward with the budget and it cannot be delayed for any reason.

Deficit Spending - Table

Public Comment II - None

Announcements – Mr. Furtado congratulated staff for a successful graduation ceremony.

Mr. Tellier announced that Kent Heights will be working on the playground on Saturday, June 25th.

Mr. Tsonos congratulated Mrs. Horsford on her retirement after 21 years of service.

Mr. Tsonos stated that as we go forward we are facing problems down the road and he asked everyone to support Mr. Daft in his position as Interim Superintendent at this time.

Motion was made by Mr. Furtado to adjourn at 7:20PM, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee